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The Family Fluency Program

Home–school connections can support fluency development for all readers, including at-risk students and English-language learners.

One goal of reading instruction is to help children become fluent readers. When children are fluent they read automatically, decoding words quickly and accurately (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). Fluent readers read with prosody—that is, they use the appropriate pitch, pace, phrasing, and expression (Schreiber, 1987, 1991). Fluent reading aids comprehension. According to the report of the U.S. National Reading Panel (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000), fluency is a predictor of reading success. Although it has been found that fluency is a major goal in reading instruction, teachers are not as familiar as they should be with fluency strategies, and they are not using them regularly (Rasinski, 1989). It is often assumed that if students can decode they will become fluent. Research has indicated that this is not necessarily so, and therefore students need training in fluency strategies (Allington, 1983; Reutzel, 1996).

The success of a literacy program, to a certain extent, depends on the literacy environment at home. Successful family literacy programs promote parent–child interaction with many types of literacy events (Wasik, 2004). Involving parents as an integral part of literacy instruction is crucial. Letting parents know how they can help to support the school program at home is important, but home–school programs need to be easy to use. Materials sent home should be introduced to children in school first. The content should be nonthreatening and the activities need to be enjoyable (Morrow, Scoblionko, & Shafer, 1995; Morrow & Young, 1997). In a meta-analysis of 20 interventions involving 1,583 families (Sénéchal, 2003), results clearly showed that parent involvement had a positive effect on children's reading acquisition. The most effective form of parent involvement, producing the best results, was training parents to use a specific reading strategy that their children were working on in school (Darling & Westberg, 2004). While reviewing literature about family literacy we found many programs that dealt with very young children (e.g., Even Start and Head Start for preschoolers and their parents), but few that dealt with children in the primary grades and beyond (Wasik, 2004).

Teachers, other school personnel, and parents must communicate and collaborate with one another to contribute to children's literacy growth. This is particularly important in schools with diverse populations (Casanova, 1987; Chavkin & Gonzalez, 1995). In the Family Fluency Program our goal was to heighten the awareness of parents, children, and teachers concerning the important roles they collectively play in the literacy development of children.

The Family Fluency Program introduced parents whose children were in a fluency program at school to strategies for use at home that would engage their children in fluency development experiences. We wanted to find out if the parents involved in the fluency workshop sessions did the following:

- engaged in fluency building activities at home,
- developed heightened awareness about the importance of fluency training in their child's literacy development, and
- increased the level of literacy involvement at home with their children.

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The Family Fluency Program was part of a larger investigation called Fluency-Oriented Reading Instruction (FORI; Stahl, Heubach, & Cramond, 1997). Before we discuss the Family Fluency Program, it is important to describe the context in which the program was embedded.

The FORI study

Recent reviews of fluent reading have suggested that fluency-oriented approaches to literacy instruction increase students' automatic word recognition, assist with comprehension development, and promote the use of prosody (NICHD, 2000). It seems that repetition and practice of the same passage lead to comprehension development. There is a strong connection between prosody and comprehension: When children are able to read at an appropriate pace, with appropriate expression and phrasing, they comprehend better. Parsing or segmenting texts for children to help them with prosody enhances their comprehension as well. Researchers are generally finding that assisted and repeated reading and parsing of texts aid reading comprehension (Cromer, 1970; O'Shea & Sindelar, 1983; Tan & Nicholson, 1997).

Strategies that have shown promise in enhancing fluency include repeated reading (Dahl, 1979; Samuels, 1979), partner reading (Koskinen & Blum, 1984), word reading efficiency (Torgesen, et al., 1999), and listening to good fluent reading by a teacher or on a tape (Chomsky, 1978). Hoffman (1987) and Hoffman and Crone (1985) tried to enhance fluency by having teachers read a selection to children with the appropriate pace, pitch, expression, and phrasing. The teachers also discussed vocabulary and concepts about the story before and after reading, and children were asked to echo-read the same selection. The anecdotal evidence from these studies indicated that the students' rate, accuracy, and comprehension improved.

Repetition of passages and scaffolded reading of significant amounts of connected text have been found to be effective strategies in teaching fluency (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). In a fluency development lesson, the teacher modeled reading short texts, then the text was read chorally by the students, and finally children read the same text in pairs (Rasinski, 1990). This study showed that children in the treatment group made greater improvements in their reading rate than children in traditional literacy activities.

The FORI study that we describe in this article involved the work of many researchers, including those just discussed. Its purpose was to identify effective procedures for teaching reading with a focus on fluency training (Kuhn & Stahl, 2003). The five-year study was funded by a grant from the Interagency Educational Research Initiative (IERI) and took place in two school districts in the southeastern United States and one in the northeast. There were 24 second-grade classrooms involved, with a total of 376 children. We discuss here the school district sample from the northeast during one year of the study.

Participants

The community in which the study took place consisted of working class families with low-middle to low incomes. Approximately 40% of students across the district qualified for free or reduced-cost lunch. A total of 129 students from six second-grade classrooms were participating in the FORI study. Three classrooms were in the repeated-reading fluency treatment group, and three were in a control group.

More than 30 home languages were represented in the sample. For this portion of the study, the researchers decided that students who were receiving English-language support services would not be included in the assessments because the assessments were not available in their languages. Of the remaining 115 participants, 62 children were in the treatment group: 30 girls and 32 boys; 25% African American, 25% European American, 41% Latina/o, and 8% Asian American; mean age, 7 years and 6 months (SD = 4 months) at the start of the study. The control group comprised 53 children from a demographically similar school in the district: 27 girls and 26 boys; 29% African American, 17% European American, 48% Latina/o, and 6% Asian American; mean age, 7 years and 6 months (SD = 4 months).

The program in the control and treatment groups

The control group used the school's basal reading program and spent 90 minutes a day in reading

instruction. There was a morning message lesson; then the teacher would read a trade book to the children and have a skill minilesson based on the basal reading anthology. Children took turns reading from the basal reader, and there were a few minutes of independent silent reading for the whole group. The teachers also had small-group guided reading instruction after the morning whole-group activities.

The FORI treatment group also had 90 minutes of reading instruction that began with a morning message and a minilesson on a particular skill. The story that was read aloud was from the basal program, and the FORI treatment (to be described) occurred at this time. Treatment group teachers also had small-group guided reading sessions. They ended the 90 minutes with a trade book read-aloud and some time for independent silent reading.

The major difference between the treatment and control groups was in how the basal reader was used. The control classes had minimal discussion or introduction prior to reading the story. They then did oral reading one at a time and some silent reading. In the treatment group, the basal readings included strong support and guidance from the teacher before and after reading and repeated readings of one selection in different formats on different days.

The specifics of the FORI treatment, which was carried out daily in English, were as follows.

- On Monday the teacher read the basal story to the children as they followed along in their own books. Prior to reading she introduced the vocabulary. The class also discussed major concepts and built background knowledge about the text they were about to hear. After reading, discussion about the story continued. This lesson was 30 minutes.
- On Tuesday the class echo-read the same basal story. There was discussion about vocabulary, concepts, and relating the story to life experiences before and after echo reading. This lesson was 20 minutes.
- On Wednesday the children choral-read the story with discussion before and after reading. The discussion about the story became more analytic and inferential with each day. This lesson was 20 minutes.
- On Thursday there was partner reading of the story, and students were instructed to discuss it with partners before and after reading. The guidelines for the partners were for one child to begin by reading the first page and the other to read the second page. This could vary to having children read two pages each. This lesson was 20 minutes.
- On Friday there could be extension activities related to the story that engaged the children in reading and writing about the selection. Often the teacher used this time for a new trade book story because children had spent enough time on the same selection and were ready to deal with new text. This lesson was 20 minutes.
- The basal was sent home twice a week for parents to read to or with their children. They read the same story being read in school that week. Parents who could not read English listened to their children read. The children read the story, and the parents echo-read. We also told parents who could not read English to read familiar stories that they had at home in their language with their children. They could echo-read, choral-read, or partner-read these stories.

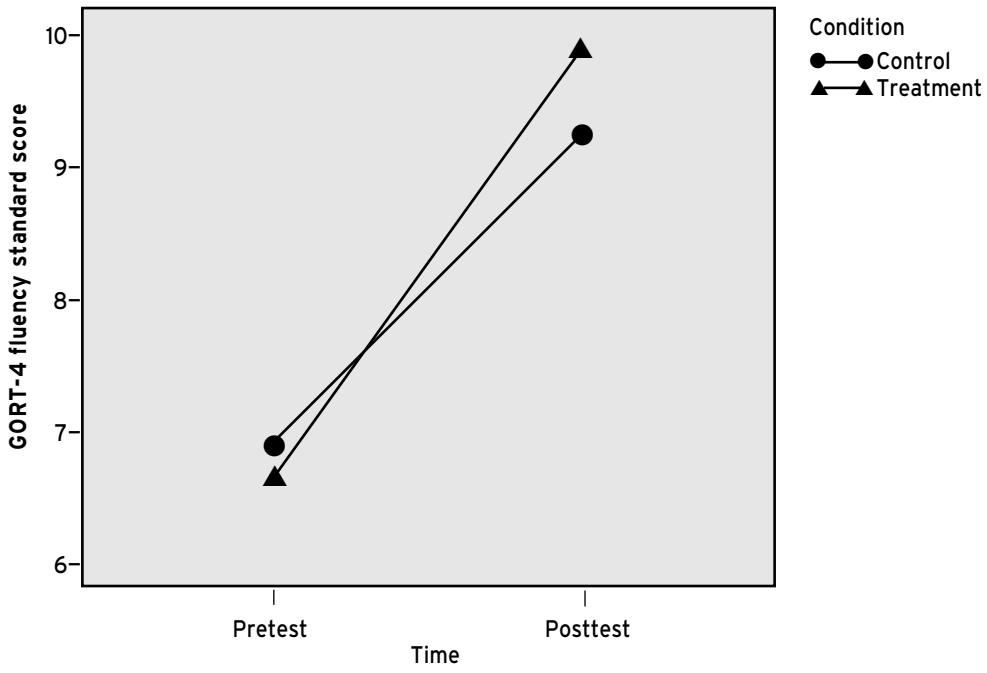
One reason for using on-level material that might be too difficult for some was to allow the children to hear new and interesting concepts. If below-level readers are exposed only to material at their instructional level, they often miss enrichment activities that are experienced by other students.

The teachers who participated in the intervention classrooms attended two training sessions prior to putting the program in place. The teachers who were in the control group had the opportunity to take part in a training workshop at the end of the intervention. All treatment and control teachers were observed during reading instruction six times a year to determine their adherence to the treatment and to see if the reading programs were similar in nature in the treatment and control rooms, except for the FORI treatment.

Assessment of oral reading proficiency

To examine the effects of the program, the Gray Oral Reading Test, Fourth Edition (GORT-4;

FIGURE 1
Time and instructional condition interaction



Wiederholt & Bryant, 2001) was used as a standardized assessment of text reading fluency. The GORT-4 consists of a series of increasingly difficult passages that are read aloud. Scoring is based on the number of reading errors and the time it takes to read each passage. The GORT-4 has reliability indices ranging from .87 to .96 in the age range used in this study and concurrent validity estimates with other measures of reading ranging from .39 to .89 (median $r = .64$). The test has a normative mean score of 10 and a standard deviation of 3 standard score points. The fluency score provides a global picture of students' oral reading skills. The GORT-4 was administered as a pretest during the first month of school, and as a posttest during the final month.

Results

Age-based standard scores were used in all analyses. To assess the effectiveness of the FORI program for enhancing children's reading fluency, we carried out a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA). We had one within-subjects factor, time (pretest versus posttest), and one between-subjects factor, instructional condition (FORI versus control). This analysis found a significant main effect of time, F (I, 113) = 228.444, $p < .001$, and a main effect of instructional condition that was not significant, F, 1.

What is important, however, is the significant time and instructional condition interaction, F (1,113) = 4.96, $p = .028$, partial $\eta^2 = .042$. This showed a greater improvement in reading fluency among FORI children than children in the control group and is shown in Figure l.

To ensure that the program was effective for struggling readers, we carried out an analysis of children in the study who were in a remedial program in addition to their regular classroom instruction. Findings demonstrated that participation in the remedial program did not interact with participation in the FORI program ($p > .10$). This infor-

mation indicates that struggling readers benefited from the program at similar rates as typical readers.

The Family Fluency Program

According to Epstein (1990, 1991), it is crucial to develop partnerships between school and home. Such partnerships get parents involved in their children's home literacy learning, school literacy learning, and achievement. This involvement is particularly important because schools often do not recognize the knowledge that linguistically and culturally diverse students bring with them. Likewise, parents need help to understand the models of learning used in schools. When interactions through partnerships are formed, they are likely to help parents and schools understand each other better.

The Family Fluency Program had two major components for the parents of children in the treatment group. First, we sent home the basal readers twice a week for parents and children to echo-read the selection. Parents documented their readings with their children and provided comments if they had any.

Second, we offered three evening workshops for parents in October, February, and April. The objectives of the workshops were to heighten awareness about the importance of fluency, describe the school program, and discuss activities that parents could do with their children at home to enhance fluency.

The greatest challenge when creating a family program in the type of community in which we worked is getting parents to attend sessions. We sent home several notes in advance of the meetings and made phone calls to families on the day before the meetings to remind them. Teachers helped us by asking the children to remind their parents before and on the day of a meeting. Because the children were invited to participate, they encouraged their parents to take them. Another advantage that resulted from inviting the children was that parents were more likely to come because they enjoyed seeing their children engaged in school activities.

The first parent workshop

The first training session was successful, with 35 parents and about 50 children. The parents brought their second graders as well as some older and younger siblings. (For parents who did not attend, we sent the packet of materials given out at the training session home with their children on the next day of school. We followed up with phone calls to parents to help explain the program.)

The meeting began with refreshments, and then the children went to another room with teachers to supervise them. We described the school program to the parents, described its purpose, and discussed the strategies being used in school. We demonstrated the strategies with a short story similar to those that the children were reading in school. We talked about building background for the story before reading and how to connect the story to the lives of the children. We demonstrated echo reading, choral reading, and partner reading.

Using the same story, we engaged the parents in a discussion prior to reading. Then we asked them to try the fluency strategies with us. We echo-read the short story, then we choral-read it, and finally the parents engaged in partner reading. During partner reading, we asked the partners to look at the pictures and discuss what they thought the story might be about. Then the partners decided who would read first. The first reader read one page and the next reader read the next page until the story was done. At the end of the story, the partners talked about the parts they liked best and how the story connected to their lives.

We discussed the importance of oral reading. We discussed how oral reading in a group provides a sense of community so that the teacher or parent can provide a good model for reading as the children follow along. The repetition helps with decoding, learning new vocabulary, understanding the text, and being able to use the correct pace and expression. We provided a handout for the parents, in both English and Spanish, which explained the strategies (Figure 2). We also had a Spanish interpreter at each workshop. We explained to parents who could not read English how they could help by listening to their children read and letting their children echo-read to them. They could then repeat what was read. We encouraged them to choral-read with their children as well. We made audiotapes of the stories for families who could not speak English to help them participate.

After the parent session, we invited the children back into the room to work with another very

FIGURE 2
Reading activities to do with the books your child brings home from school

Echo reading: You read one line, and the child reads the same line after you. Increase the number of lines you read at one time as the child's reading improves. To be sure the child is looking at the words, ask him or her to follow the print with a finger. Try to echo-read at least one story each week.

Choral reading: You and your child read the same text aloud together. Choral reading should be done at least twice a week.

Partner reading: You and your child take turns reading. Start by reading one sentence and asking the child to read the next sentence. As the child's fluency improves, you read a page and he/she reads a page. Partner-read about once a week.

Repeated reading: Read the same book or story more than once in the same week.

Remember: Whenever you read with your child, use as much expression as you can so that your reading sounds like speaking and the story comes alive.

Actividades de lectura que puede hacer cuando su hijo trae libros de la escuela a su hogar

Lecturas eco: Usted lee una línea y su niño lee la misma línea después que usted haya completado la línea. Aumente el número de líneas que usted lee a medida que su hijo mejore su lectura. Para estar seguro de que su niño observa las palabras mientras que lee, pregúntale que señale con su dedo a medida que lee cada palabra de la oración. Intente la estrategia de eco por lo menos una vez en semana.

Lecturas en coro: Usted y su niño pueden leer del libro simultáneamente en voz alta. Esta estrategia se debe llevar a cabo por lo menos dos veces en semana.

Lecturas en parejas: Usted y su niño deben alternar turnos al leer. Primero, usted lee una oración y luego pídale a su niño que lea la próxima oración. A medida que la fluidez de su niño progresa, usted puede leer una página y luego su niño, la otra página. Esta estrategia de lectura en parejas se debe hacer una vez en semana.

Lecturas repetidas: Lea el mismo libro o el mismo cuento más de una vez durante la misma semana.

Recuerde: Cuando le lee a su niño, recuerde que debe emplear muchas expresiones enfáticas para que el cuento suene como si estuviera hablándole al niño y el cuento tenga vida.

short story. We talked about the story with the parents and children by looking at the pictures before we began. We talked about new vocabulary and concepts. Then the story was read to the whole group. Next, we echo-read the story with the parents and children. After echo reading, we all choral-read the story. Finally, each parent and child partner-read the story.

We reminded the parents that they were to read the stories that were sent home twice a week and record this activity on the forms we provided. Parents were encouraged to use the fluency strategies with their children many times during the week with other reading as well. For parents who could not read English, we explained that echo reading, choral reading, and partner reading books in their language with their child would also be helpful. When we finished with the workshop we socialized over refreshments.

The second parent workshop

A second meeting was held at midyear to discuss what parents and children were doing at home. We asked the children and their parents what they liked best—repeated readings, discussions, echo reading, choral reading, or partner reading. We asked for their thoughts and feelings about the activities, and we answered questions that they had. The parents enjoyed video clips of the children par-

ticipating in echo, choral, and partner reading in the classrooms. We reviewed strategies for new families who had not been to the first meeting. Thirty parents and 40 children attended the second meeting. Most of the parents were from the first meeting; however, 5 of them were new.

We provided the parents and children with an assessment measure for fluency (Figure 3), so they would be aware of what good fluent reading involves. We played a tape of excellent fluent reading, good fluent reading, and reading that was not yet fluent. The same short story was used for each of these readings, and the parents had the text to follow along. The tape recordings were evaluated as "Excellent," "Good," or "Needs Work":

- Excellent fluent reading flowed smoothly and at a good pace. All words were decoded properly, and expression demonstrated understanding of the text.
- Good fluent reading was done at a pace that was a little slow but not choppy, and words were pronounced properly with enough expression to show some understanding.
- Reading that needed work was word by word, slow, choppy, and lacking expression, and some words were read incorrectly.

FIGURE 3
Assessing fluency

The following are some guidelines for assessing fluency:

1. Tape record your child reading a short passage.
2. Several months later tape record another reading.
3. Play the two recordings to listen for improvement.
4. Evaluate each reading as "Needs work," "Good," or "Excellent":

   Needs work—Reading is word by word, slow, and choppy, with some words missed and not enough expression to show an understanding of the text.

   Good—The pace of the reading is slow but not choppy. Most words are pronounced properly with enough expression to show some understanding of the text.

   Excellent—Reading flows smoothly at a good pace. All words are decoded properly, and expression demonstrates an understanding of what is being read.

5. Note if there is improvement from the first tape to the second.

We suggested that parents could tape-record children's reading. A second tape at a later date could be compared with the earlier tape, and they could evaluate progress together. Tape recorders and cassettes were provided for parents who did not have them, and the meeting ended with refreshments. We were well aware that we could suggest, model, and supply materials, but what the parents actually did was somewhat beyond our control.

The third parent workshop

The third meeting drew 32 parents. Some of them had been to all three meetings, others had attended two, but no one was there for the first time. We asked parents to bring audiotapes of their children's reading to determine if they had made progress. At this meeting the children performed an echo reading and a choral reading, and two children illustrated a partner reading they had practiced with their teachers in school. As mentioned earlier, having the children participate in the meetings motivated the parents to come and consequently to participate at home. As always we served refreshments. At the end of the meeting parents received a VIP certificate for being Very Involved Parents.

Results of the Family Fluency Program

We wanted to find out if the parents involved in the fluency workshop sessions did the following:

- increased their literacy involvement at home with their children,
- engaged in fluency building activities at home, and
- had a heightened awareness about the importance of fluency training in their child's literacy development.

To determine parent participation in children's schoolwork at home, we asked teachers to report how involved they thought the parents were. To rank parent involvement, the teachers used a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 indicating a lot of home involvement and 1 indicating very little. The average ranking for families in the treatment group was 3,

TABLE 1
Percentage of parents who help with homework every week

Frequency of parental homework assistance	Percentage of treatment group families	Percentage of control group families
5 x per week	69.7%	46.9%
4 x per week	21.2%	25.0%
3 x per week	3.0%	6.3%
2 x per week	6.1%	12.4%
1 x per week	0.0%	0.0%
0 x per week	0.0%	9.4%

TABLE 2
Percentage of parents who read to or with child every week

Frequency of parental reading	Percentage of treatment group families	Percentage of control group families
5 x per week	45.5%	9.4%
4 x per week	12.1 %	21.9%
3 x per week	21.2%	28.1 %
2 x per week	21.2%	25.0%
1 x per week	0.0%	15.6%

whereas the average for the control families was 2. Teachers' rankings were based on forms sent home twice a week to parents to report reading with their child. They were also based on teacher perceptions and on informal discussions with parents and children. We believe the responses suggest that our intervention had some positive effect.

Another measure of family involvement was a survey for parents in both the treatment and control groups. The survey was sent home with the children. To ensure return we made phone calls to the homes, and teachers talked to the children daily to encourage the families to return the surveys. On the surveys parents were asked to describe the following:

- how often they were able to help children with homework,
- how often they were able to read to or with their children, and
- how they felt they could help their children to become fluent readers.

The treatment group parents returned 35 surveys, and the control group parents returned 28.

The nature of the family data is anecdotal, and we also realize that we did not have large numbers of parents involved or responding. In spite of this, the information returned was promising (see Tables 1 and 2). Of the parents who completed surveys in the treatment group, 69.7% said they helped their child with homework five times a week, compared with 46.9% in the control group. In the treatment group a total of 78.8% of the parents reported reading to or with their children three or more times a week, with 45.5% reporting five times a week. In the control group 59.4% reported reading to or with their children three or more times a week, with only 9.4% reporting five times a week. We are aware that these data are based on parental self-reports, but we believe they are strong enough to suggest that there was a positive effect in the treatment group.

Parents were asked how they helped their children become more fluent readers. Table 3 provides the responses for both the treatment and control groups. Many parents with children in the treatment group demonstrated an understanding of how to help their children become fluent readers. They

TABLE 3
Parental responses to survey question on how to help children become fluent readers

Parental response	No. of responses
Treatment group	
Practice reading by repeating the same story over and over	17
Choral-read	15
Ask questions about the story	15
Read to your child, read along with your child, partner read	15
Sound out words	14
Help children to read at the right pace—not too fast, not too slow	10
Read with expression	7
Encourage and be patient with your child	7
Echo-read	6
Use the dictionary	1
Use computer programs	1
Control group	
Practice phonics	18
Read to your child often/daily	17
Have your child read aloud	15
Work on increasing vocabulary	10
Read more difficult books	6
Help with writing	6
Help with spelling	4
Provide parental support	4
Find books of interest to your child	4
Use easy books	3
Partner-read	3
Read with expression	2
Practice the same book over again	2
Play reading games	2
Set a good example	2
Praise your child	1
Correct mistakes	1
Encourage children to read alone	1

listed the strategies learned from the parent sessions and the materials that were sent home. They also used the vocabulary involved in fluency instruction, mentioning repeated reading, echo reading, choral reading, partner reading, pacing, and using expression. Some of these terms were used by control group parents, but with much less consistency. The answers from the treatment group were consistent; the answers from the control group were more varied.

We felt particularly gratified by this survey because it was open ended and the parents came up with responses on their own. The strategies and terms used in fluency development are uncommon and often unknown even to teachers. The survey data show that many parents in the treatment group did learn the fluency vocabulary and strategies.

Parent, child, and teacher interviews

We interviewed parents, children, and teachers from the treatment groups using questions related to the home fluency program. The data were pooled; that is, the answers to all of the questions asked were listed. When an answer occurred more than once, it was not repeated. Children were asked, "How do you feel about the home fluency program?" The following were the answers given.

> I don't feel alone when I'm reading.
>
> I will know how to help my children when I grow up. I will read the same stories over again with them.
>
> I will partner-read and echo-read and choral-read with my children.
>
> It is nice to read with your parents. Sometimes you

think they don't care about your schoolwork or you, but when they read with you, you know they do.

When I read with my mom I help her with her English.

Parents were asked, "How do you feel about the home fluency program?" The following answers were given.

It was fun to work with my child.

My child looked forward to working with me.

I learned some things about helping my child with reading that I didn't know about before.

I learned some things about reading from my child because my English isn't so good.

I just thought you helped children sound out words. Now I know reading the same story over and over is important.

I never knew about reading together. They called it choral reading.

I never knew about partner reading and taking turns.

The activities were easy to do and didn't take much time.

I could see an improvement in my child's reading as a result of the repeated reading that we did.

Teachers were asked, "How do you feel about the family fluency program?" Their answers included

Parents in the program read with their children more than parents I have had in the past.

Parents definitely learned the techniques to enhance fluency because they recorded on their forms echo reading, choral reading, and partner reading.

Parents recognized and mentioned the improvement they saw in their children's reading by repeating stories.

I saw improvement in many of my struggling readers as a result of the repeated readings at home. Their decoding and comprehension of repeated stories improved. It also raised their self-esteem.

Scaling up and replicating the programs

We did not upset or revise the reading program that the school had in place; we just put a different emphasis on the 20- to 30-minute FORI portion of the 90-minute reading period. Teachers needed only two training sessions to carry out the program. In following up two years after this portion of the study was carried out, we found teachers continuing the program. It was easy to scale up in other districts because we had data to support the benefits of the program and teachers to testify about the ease of implementation. The cost of the program was negligible. We used materials the teachers already had.

The home program involved three meetings. We believe the same positive results could occur with only two meetings or by combining one or two of these meetings with other school events for parents. The cost of the meetings was minimal—we had to pay two assistants to spend time with the children for about a half hour, and we provided the refreshments. Most families had tape recorders, but when they did not we lent them recorders from school on a rotating basis. This could be done because we asked the parents to tape-record their children only three times during the year.

Scaling up is a mandate of our federal government grant. We are currently in that stage and having no difficulty. As a matter of fact, we are being invited to teach the FORI piece of reading instruction as well as the family program in schools that have heard about it via word of mouth.

Finding fluency support at home

Working with parents in schools is so very important. We believe that the Family Fluency Program was successful because the activities were easy to understand and initiate, took a short time, and brought quick results. Parents could see a change in how children read as they repeated stories. They talked about improved pace and expression and about less choppy reading with better understanding. The program heightened parents' awareness of oral reading strategies that help their children. The activities enhanced parent involvement in literacy activities at home.

The information we collected and report on here showed some consistent, promising, and positive outcomes as a result of the Family Fluency Program. However, we do not know nor did we test to see if the parent program contributed to enhanced reading achievement. Because large numbers of parents were not involved and because the surveys were done anonymously, it was impossible to link the child outcomes to particular parents. Our goal was to determine whether we could

design a parent program that would help develop an understanding of fluency, because this was the focus of the school intervention. Although we agree it would be useful to collect data on specific students' growth in the future, it is beyond the scope of our goals for this article.

Successful family literacy programs promote parent–child interaction with many types of literacy events. Home–school programs need to be easy to use. Materials sent home should be introduced to children in school first. The content should be nonthreatening, and the activities need to be fun. We believe that the Family Fluency Program has these characteristics.

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